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[FR Doc. 05-9497 Filed 5-11-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8025-01-M

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

National Women's Business Council; Notice of Public Meeting

In accordance with the Women's Business Ownership Act, Public Law 106-554 as amended, the National Women's Business Council (NWBC) would like to announce a forthcoming Council meeting. The meeting will take place on Thursday, May 26, 2005, starting at 1 p.m. until 5 p.m. The meeting will be held at Carlson Companies, 701 Carlson Parkway, Minnetonka, Minnesota 55305. The meeting will discuss the National Women's Business Council's agenda and action items for fiscal year 2005, included and not limited to procurement, access to capital, access to training and technical assistance, access to markets and affordable health care.

Anyone wishing to attend and make an oral presentation must contact Katherine Stanley in writing or by fax no later than Monday, May 23, 2005, in order to be put on the agenda. Katherine Stanley, Administrative Officer, U.S. Small Business Administration, National Women's Business Council, 409 3rd Street, SW., Washington, DC 20416, phone (202) 205-3850, fax (202) 481-2101, e-mail:
Katherine.Stanley@sba.gov.

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[FR Doc. 05-9496 Filed 5-11-05; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 8025-01-P

SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

Small Business Size Standards; Public Hearings

AGENCY: U.S. Small Business Administration.

ACTION: Notice of public hearings.

SUMMARY: The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) announces that it is holding a series of public hearings throughout the country on the topic of small business size standards and other issues such as the possible participation of businesses majority-owned by venture capital companies in the Small Business Innovation Research Program. Testimony presented at these hearings will become part of the administrative

record for SBA's consideration when the Agency deliberates on approaches to simplify and restructure size standards and other changes to make size standards easier to understand and use.

DATES: The Public Hearings Section below specifies the dates and locations of the public hearings. Attendees must pre-register 5 business days prior to the scheduled hearing date.

ADDRESSES: Parties interested in testifying at or attending a public hearing must pre-register by providing a request to SBA's Office of Size Standards at

Hearings.sizestandards@sba.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Gary M. Jackson, Assistant Administrator for Size Standards, at (202) 205-6618 or at *sizestandards@sba.gov*.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Background

On March 19, 2004, SBA published a proposed rule to simplify and restructure its small business size standards by establishing most size standards based on the number of employees of a business concern and by significantly reducing the number of different size standard levels (69 FR 13130). Based on concerns expressed by a large number of commenters, SBA decided to withdraw that proposal on July 1, 2004 (69 FR 39874). However, a large number of commenters also supported the proposal in general or supported certain aspects of the proposed changes. As a result, SBA decided to reconsider its initial approach to simplifying and restructuring size standards and seek public input on the general issue of size standards, including how best to simplify and restructure size standards.

SBA is pursuing two actions to engage the public in providing its views of SBA's size standards. First, SBA published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) on December 3, 2004, requesting comment on a variety of size standards issues (69 FR 70197). Most of those issues were presented in the comments SBA had received in response to the March 19, 2004, proposed rule, but were not part of the proposed changes. SBA believes that it is beneficial to its evaluation of the comments raising those issues to provide the public at large with an opportunity to consider and comment upon them. SBA also included several issues in the ANPRM that it had under consideration as separate policy changes apart from the simplification and restructuring proposal. Specifically, the issues presented in the ANPRM consist of: (1) The approach to simplify size

standards, (2) the calculation of number of employees (including how SBA defines an employee for size purposes), (3) the use of receipts-based size standards, (4) the designation of size standards for Federal procurements, (5) the establishment of separate and distinct size standards for use solely in Federal procurement programs, (6) the establishment of tiered size standards, (7) the simplification of the affiliation regulations, (8) the simplification of the small business joint venture eligibility regulations, (9) the possible grandfathering of small business eligibility, (10) the impact of SBA size standards on the regulations of other Federal agencies, and (11) the possible participation of businesses majority-owned by venture capital companies in the Small Business Innovation Research Program and the effect such participation would have on the Program. The ANPRM comment period closed on April 3, 2005.

Second, because of the significance of the size standards initiative and importance of the other issues being considered, SBA decided to conduct a series of public hearings around the country to provide interested parties with an opportunity to meet with SBA officials and discuss their views on the issues. SBA considers the public hearings a valuable component of its deliberations. While the comments received to the ANPRM are greatly assisting SBA with its deliberations, the public hearings allow for a constructive dialogue with the public on these issues enabling SBA to more fully comprehend the views of the public. This notice provides information on the purpose, format, scheduling, and registration for the public hearings.

II. Public Hearings

A panel of SBA officials will preside over 11 formal public hearings. The purpose of the hearings is to obtain the views of SBA's stakeholders on approaches to simplify and restructure size standards, to identify other policy changes which may make size standards easier to understand and use, and to obtain stakeholder views on the other issues being considered such as the possible participation of businesses majority-owned by venture capital companies in the Small Business Innovation Research Program. Oral and written testimony will become part of the hearing record for SBA's consideration. SBA will analyze the hearing testimony along with the comments it received to the March 19, 2004, proposed rule and the December 3, 2004, ANPRM in formulating a new proposal regarding approaches